

toward the coming celebration of Israel's independence, let us reflect upon the imperative we face. Since the establishment of the term "genocide" in 1944, the terrible events in former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, and now ongoing in Sudan have taught us what will continue to happen when hatred and persecution go unchecked. The day of Yom Hashoah calls upon each one of us to work individually and collectively to rededicate ourselves to overcoming intolerance, and—perhaps just as important—indifference, wherever and whenever we encounter them.

To the vibrant Jewish community that calls our great state of Nevada home, I wish you a joyous celebration of the 61st anniversary of Israeli independence, and I look forward to many more years of productive friendship between the United States and Israel. And to all who gather today and all of this week to pay tribute to the victims and survivors of the Holocaust, let us join together in honoring their memories and pledging to take up our shared mission of remembrance and action.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Madam President, I rise today for the solemn purpose of commemorating Holocaust Remembrance Day.

I just returned from an overseas visit with SENATORS LEVIN and COLLINS to examine missile defense issues in Russia, the Czech Republic, and Poland. In Poland, I visited the Warsaw Ghetto memorials, one of which was built on the location where the Jews were transported to the death camp at Treblinka, beginning in July 1942. I was moved by visiting that place. We saw another monument built to the heroes of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. The death camps would not be liberated until 1945, but we remember this courageous struggle against overwhelming odds.

In America and throughout the world, Jews are observing this day in synagogues, reciting prayers. Young people listen to the testimonies of survivors who witnessed and were victims of the worst crimes committed by humankind, so that the Holocaust is not forgotten by future generations.

Florida has the largest number of Holocaust survivors in the entire country. These survivors remind us that the Holocaust was a tragedy of almost unimaginable proportions.

Today we remember those who lost their lives, not because of any crime they committed, but simply because of their faith and their heritage. And, though Jews were indeed the primary victims, we also remember the others who suffered persecution and were murdered by the Nazis: Gypsies and Poles, Jehovah's Witnesses, the handicapped, gays, political dissidents and Soviet prisoners of war.

In addition to marking this day, we in Congress are doing what we can to ensure that we never forget what happened during the Holocaust and that it never happens again.

Earlier this year, two of my distinguished colleagues, Senators COLLINS

and CARDIN, introduced an important resolution that I cosponsored, which condemns anti-Semitism in all its forms.

In respect for the victims of the Holocaust and surviving relatives, I will introduce a resolution on restitution or compensation for property and other assets seized by the Nazi and Communist regimes in postwar Europe, in anticipation of the International Conference on Holocaust Assets that will be held in Prague at the end of June. This conference is a followup to the International Conference that was held 10 years ago in Washington, which established the framework compensation programs that were established throughout western Europe during the past decade.

I would point out that we still must determine how to address the cases of the remaining Holocaust victims who have yet to be compensated for the unpaid value of insurance policies they held before the war. I would support legislation that actually helps survivors to obtain just compensation and avoid dragging out compensation efforts or giving false hope to survivors.

I will also be introducing the World War II War Crimes Accountability Act to encourage foreign governments to prosecute and extradite wanted criminals, and to bring them to justice.

Despite the efforts of the U.S. Government, particularly the Department of Justice, and of groups such as the Simon Wiesenthal Center, a number of perpetrators of crimes against humanity remain at large. What is worse, we know exactly where some of the individuals are living, but the countries where they reside refuse to extradite them to face justice.

We are in a race against time. Each year, more Holocaust survivors are laid to rest. Let us work together quickly to let them see a measure of justice done in their lifetime.

Finally, our Government has made solemn commitments in the past that the horror of the Holocaust will never be repeated. And yet we are all well aware of the grim stories of ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s, the mass murder of Tutsis in Rwanda in 1994, and now the ongoing genocide in Darfur. America as a nation must be a leader on the world stage to prevent genocide.

I urge President Obama, Secretary of State Clinton and UN Ambassador Rice to continue the battle against ignorance, intolerance, and instability that seem to contribute to genocide, and to confront those governments that engage in genocide. And America must make every effort to ensure that those who commit these horrific crimes face justice.

RETIREMENT OF RABBI SOIFER

Mr. REID. Madam President, I rise today to recognize Rabbi Myra Soifer, who will retire on June 30, 2009, after 25 years of service to the congregation of

Temple Sinai in Reno, NV. Rabbi Soifer was one of the first ten women ordained as a rabbi after the Reform Jewish movement accepted them in 1972. A well accomplished scholar, she received her undergraduate degree from Lawrence University, her Masters in Hebrew Letters and ordination from Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, Ohio, and graduate work at the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, CA, and the Leo Baeck College Rabbinical School in London, England.

Rabbi Soifer has enriched her community with her grasp of the Torah and its teachings. Under her guidance, Temple Sinai has grown into a vibrant religious community with an expanded religious school and an enlarged campus that can accommodate both the congregation's largest gatherings as well as community meetings.

Besides being a dedicated spiritual leader for her congregants, she has been a powerful voice for good in the community at large. Rabbi Soifer has been a fearless, driving force in bringing the greater faith community together around prayer, and to address moral and political issues. She led Temple Sinai to help organize the Northern Nevada interfaith response to the tragic events of 9/11. She has organized women in the faith community as the founder of the Reno Clergywomen's Association, and she created an interfaith clergy study group known as the "Study Buddies", which has been going strong for over 20 years. The community recognizes her as a passionate advocate for social justice, celebrating cultural and religious diversity, and caring for the underserved locally and globally.

Her accomplishments have been recognized in many ways over the years, as she has been the recipient of the Metropolitan Community Church's Human Rights Award; University of Nevada, Reno's Psychological Services Award; ACLU's Civil Libertarian of the Year; and Reno Magazine's "88 people to watch in '88" Award. Her reach in the community goes beyond the Temple's walls, having worked with the Washoe County School District, Nevada Coalition Against the Death Penalty, Witness For Peace, Reno/Sparks Metro Ministry, Community Coalition to End Hate and Violence, Northern Nevada AIDS Foundation, Planned Parenthood of Northern Nevada, Northern Nevada Black Cultural Awareness Society, and the Food Bank of Northern Nevada.

I join with Nevadans throughout the Silver State to honor Rabbi Myra Soifer for her lifetime dedication to her faith, her community, and the social justice of all people. She has indisputably made a tremendous impact which will endure in the institutions she has enriched.

LEGACY OF CHICAGO'S ARTURO VELASQUEZ, SR.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, at the start of the Great Depression, a

Mexican immigrant mother in Gary, IN, found herself with no job, no money and no food. So she did the only thing she could think of: She decided to pack up her young son and move back to Mexico, where they would at least have something to eat.

Fortunately for the city of Chicago, which I am honored to represent, the old Model T Ford they rode in overturned near Albuquerque, leaving them stranded without money.

The mother took a job as a farm worker and they began migrating between sugar beet fields in the Black Hills of South Dakota and tomato farms in Minnesota and Iowa.

Eventually, they landed in Chicago.

Over the next seven decades, that little boy, Arturo Velasquez, would become a civic treasure in Chicago: an entrepreneur, philanthropist, activist, advisor to Chicago's leaders, and patriarch of one of Chicago's leading Hispanic families.

Arturo Velasquez was dedicated to his family, his church, his business, and the city of Chicago, especially the Mexican American community on Chicago's South Side.

This past Friday, Mr. Velasquez passed on at the age of 93. But his influence will live on in the people he inspired, the lives he helped change, and the opportunities he helped create for so many.

Mr. Velasquez was a gracious man. He was also humble. He used to describe himself as a "jukebox operator."

In fact, he owned one of Chicago's largest music and game firms, Velasquez Automated Music Co, which he founded more than 70 years ago. It is run today by his son Ed and daughter Maria Elena.

In 1970, Mr. Velasquez helped another son, Art, found Azteca Foods, Inc; which supplies thousands of groceries and restaurants with tortillas and other food products.

He played a key role in the establishment of the Mexican American Chamber of Commerce, the Azteca Lions Club, the Illinois Federation of Mexican Americans and many other business and civic groups.

Formal education was a luxury for Mr. Velasquez, as it is for many children of migrant workers.

He attended 13 different grade schools and he never went to high school. But he was a strong advocate for education.

He was determined that all five of his children would graduate from college, and they did.

He also worked tirelessly for decades to provide other young people, especially Mexican Americans, with the educational opportunities he himself never received.

He served as a trustee for two colleges: the City Colleges of Chicago and National Louis University.

A year ago, Chicago City Colleges' West Side Technical Institute, which Mr. Velasquez supported strongly, was renamed in his honor.

Arturo Velasquez continues to help others, even now.

His family asks that anyone wishing to honor his memory donate to two causes that were important to him.

The first is the City Colleges of Chicago Foundation for Scholarships to the Arturo Velasquez West Side Technical Institute, a scholarship fund for Latinos in the 2-year technical education program who want to go on to 4-year colleges.

The second cause is Alivio Medical Center, near and dear to my heart, a community health center, founded by Mr. Velasquez's daughter Carmen, that provides free health care to thousands of Chicago families each year in the mostly Latino Pilsen, Little Village and Back of the Yards neighborhoods.

I cannot tell you how impressed I am with Carmen and her work at Alivio. The fact that her father inspired her and now wants to continue helping her, even in his passing, says a lot about the family.

Mr. Velasquez received many well-deserved accolades including an honorary doctorate for public service from St. Xavier University, and the Ohtl Award from the Mexican government, the highest award to a Mexican who lives outside that country.

And in 2002, he was honored by the Chicago Historical Society with its Making History Award.

But what meant most to Mr. Velasquez was his family.

He and his wife Shirley were married for 72 years. They were blessed with five children, 11 grandchildren and 19 great-grandchildren.

As a young father, Mr. Velasquez dreamed of being able to provide his family with a home of their own.

It took a while. He bought an empty lot at 72nd Street and St. Louis Avenue in 1945. But he did not build a house on it until 1950.

Mrs. Velasquez once told a reporter, "Every Sunday he would take the kids to the empty lot. He'd tell them, 'Go jump on it. It's yours.' And I'd say, 'Can't you think of any other place to go?'"

In 1959, Mr. Velasquez covered the White Sox for a Spanish-language newspaper. That year, the Sox won their first division pennant in 40 years, only to lose the World Series to the Los Angeles Dodgers.

In 2005, he saw his great-grandson Willy throw out the first pitch during Game 2 of the division series.

He had tickets to every game of the playoffs.

And he saw his beloved White Sox, at last, win the World Series, another dream come true for a man who made the dreams of so many others possible.

I want to express my deep condolences to his wife Shirley, their children, Art, Raymond, Carmen, Maria Elena and Edward, and their grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Arturo Velasquez was a gracious and generous man and a true community leader. He will be greatly missed.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

Mrs. BOXER. Madam President, today I rise to pay tribute to 11 young Americans who have been killed in Iraq since November 19. This brings to 870 the number of servicemembers either from California or based in California that have been killed while serving our country in Iraq. This represents 20 percent of all U.S. deaths in Iraq.

GySgt Marcelo R. Velasco, 40, of Miami, FL, died November 19 from injuries sustained in a non-hostile incident in Anbar province, Iraq. Gunnery Sergeant Velasco was assigned to I Marine Expeditionary Force Headquarters Group, I Marine Expeditionary Force, Camp Pendleton, CA.

LCpl Robert L. Johnson, 21, of Central Point, OR, died December 20 as a result of a nonhostile incident in Anbar province, Iraq. Lance Corporal Johnson was assigned to the 5th Combat Logistics Battalion, 1st Combat Logistics Regiment, 1st Marine Logistics Group, Camp Pendleton, CA.

SPC Tony J. Gonzales, 20, of Newman, CA, died December 28 in Sadr City, Iraq, when an improvised explosive device detonated near his vehicle. Specialist Gonzales was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade, 1st Armored Division, Baumholder, Germany.

PFC Benjamin B. Tollefson, 22, of Concord, CA, died December 31 in Balad, Iraq, of wounds suffered when insurgents attacked his unit with indirect fire in Ghazaliya. Private First Class Tollefson was assigned to the Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Fort Riley, KS.

PFC Grant A. Cotting, 19, of Corona, CA, died January 24 in Kut, Iraq, of injuries sustained from a noncombat related incident. Private First Class Cotting was assigned to the 515th Sapper Company, 5th Engineer Battalion, 4th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, Fort Leonard Wood, MO.

SSG Sean D. Diamond, 41, of Dublin, CA, died February 15 in As Salam, Iraq, when an improvised explosive device detonated near his vehicle. Staff Sergeant Diamond was assigned to the 610th Engineer Support Company, 14th Engineer Battalion, 555th Engineer Brigade, Fort Lewis, WA.

1LT Daniel B. Hyde, 24, of Modesto, CA, died March 7 in Samarra, Iraq, of wounds sustained in Tikrit when an explosive device struck his unit vehicle. First Lieutenant Hyde was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, Schofield Barracks, HI.

PFC Bryce E. Gautier, 22, of Cypress, CA, died April 10 when his military vehicle was struck by a suicide vehicle-borne improvised explosive device in Mosul, Iraq. Private First Class Gautier was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 67th Armor Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Fort Carson, CO.